

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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|--------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Michael Maxwell Barkley, |) | C/A No. 0:15-4928-DCN-PJG |
| |) | |
| Petitioner, |) | |
| |) | |
| v. |) | REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION |
| |) | |
| Warden B.J. Meeks, |) | |
| |) | |
| Respondent. |) | |
| |) | |

The petitioner, Michael Maxwell Barkley, a self-represented prisoner confined at Federal Correctional Institution (“FCI”) Williamsburg, filed a Petition for a writ of habeas corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2241. (ECF No. 1.) This matter is before the court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b) and Local Civil Rule 73.02(B)(2)(c) (D.S.C.) Having reviewed the Petition in accordance with applicable law, the court concludes that it should be summarily dismissed.

I. Factual and Procedural Background

Petitioner challenges a conviction and 240-month sentence imposed in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida on January 13, 2014 for conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute 280 grams or more of a mixture and substance containing a detectable amount of cocaine base in violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841, 846. (ECF No. 1 at 1-3.) Petitioner indicates that he did not file a direct appeal of his conviction and sentence, but did file a motion to vacate, set aside, or correct the sentence under 28 U.S.C. § 2255 in September 2015, which the sentencing court denied. (Id. at 4.) Petitioner now brings this § 2241 Petition seeking relief from his conviction and sentence.

II. Discussion

A. Standard of Review

Under established local procedure in this judicial district, a careful review has been made of the *pro se* Petition filed in this case pursuant to the Rules Governing § 2254 Cases,¹ 28 U.S.C. § 2254; the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (“AEDPA”), Pub. L. No. 104-132, 110 Stat. 1214; and in light of the following precedents: Denton v. Hernandez, 504 U.S. 25 (1992); Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 324-25 (1989); Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519 (1972); Nasim v. Warden, Md. House of Corr., 64 F.3d 951 (4th Cir. 1995) (en banc); Todd v. Baskerville, 712 F.2d 70 (4th Cir. 1983).

This court is required to liberally construe *pro se* petitions. Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89 (2007). *Pro se* petitions are held to a less stringent standard than those drafted by attorneys, *id.*; Gordon v. Leeke, 574 F.2d 1147, 1151 (4th Cir. 1978), and a federal district court is charged with liberally construing a petition filed by a *pro se* litigant to allow the development of a potentially meritorious case. Hughes v. Rowe, 449 U.S. 5, 9 (1980); Cruz v. Beto, 405 U.S. 319 (1972). When a federal court is evaluating a *pro se* petition the petitioner’s allegations are assumed to be true. Erickson, 551 U.S. at 93 (citing Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555-56 (2007)).

However, the requirement of liberal construction does not mean that the court can ignore a clear failure in the pleading to allege facts which set forth a claim currently cognizable in a federal district court. Weller v. Dep’t of Soc. Servs., 901 F.2d 387 (4th Cir. 1990). The mandated liberal construction afforded to *pro se* pleadings means that if the court can reasonably read the pleadings to state a valid claim on which the petitioner could prevail, it should do so; however, a district court

¹ The Rules Governing Section 2254 are applicable to habeas actions brought under § 2241. See Rule 1(b).

may not rewrite a petition to include claims that were never presented, Barnett v. Hargett, 174 F.3d 1128 (10th Cir. 1999), construct the petitioner's legal arguments for him, Small v. Endicott, 998 F.2d 411 (7th Cir. 1993), or "conjure up questions never squarely presented" to the court, Beaudett v. City of Hampton, 775 F.2d 1274, 1278 (4th Cir. 1985).

B. Analysis

"[I]t is well established that defendants convicted in federal court are obliged to seek habeas relief from their convictions and sentences through § 2255." Rice v. Rivera, 617 F.3d 802, 807 (4th Cir. 2010) (citing In re Vial, 115 F.3d 1192, 1194 (4th Cir. 1997)). In contrast, a motion filed under § 2241 is typically used to challenge the manner in which a sentence is executed. See In re Vial, 115 F.3d at 1194 n.5. A petitioner cannot challenge his federal conviction and sentence under § 2241 unless he can satisfy the § 2255 savings clause, which states:

An application for a writ of habeas corpus in behalf of a prisoner who is authorized to apply for relief by motion pursuant to this section, shall not be entertained if it appears that the applicant has failed to apply for relief, by motion, to the court which sentenced him, or that such court has denied him relief, unless it also appears that the remedy by motion is inadequate or ineffective to test the legality of his detention.

28 U.S.C. § 2255(e); see also Rice, 617 F.3d at 807.²

The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit has held that a petitioner must establish the following criteria to demonstrate that a § 2255 motion is inadequate or ineffective to test the legality of a prisoner's detention:

² Petitioner indicates that he has been unsuccessful in seeking relief under § 2255. However, "the remedy afforded by § 2255 is not rendered inadequate or ineffective merely because an individual has been unable to obtain relief under that provision, or because an individual is procedurally barred from filing a § 2255 motion." See In re Vial, 115 F.3d at 1194 n.5 (citations omitted).

(1) at the time of conviction, settled law of this circuit or the Supreme Court established the legality of the conviction; (2) subsequent to the prisoner's direct appeal and first § 2255 motion, the substantive law changed such that the conduct of which the prisoner was convicted is deemed not to be criminal; and (3) the prisoner cannot satisfy the gatekeeping provisions of § 2255 because the new rule is not one of constitutional law.

In re Jones, 226 F.3d 328, 333-34 (4th Cir. 2000).

Moreover, the Fourth Circuit has repeatedly held that the savings clause only preserves claims in which the petitioner alleges actual innocence of a conviction and does not extend to petitioners who challenge only their sentences. See United States v. Poole, 531 F.3d 263, 267 n.7 (4th Cir. 2008). As the United States Supreme Court has noted, actual innocence "means factual innocence, not mere legal insufficiency." Bousley v. United States, 523 U.S. 614, 623 (1998).

In this case, Petitioner indicates that he entered a guilty plea to the challenged offense and argues that his plea is "is null and void on its face due to the court[']s failure to inform the defendant of the essential elements of the crime." (ECF No. 1 at 15-16.) Petitioner relies on McFadden v. United States, 135 S. Ct. 2298 (2015), which holds that "§ 841(a)(1) requires the Government to establish that the defendant knew he was dealing with 'a controlled substance.'" Id. at 2302. However, Petitioner fails to provide, nor has the court found, any authority to plausibly suggest that the holding in McFadden had any impact on the criminality of the offense for which Petitioner was convicted. Moreover, the court notes that the sentencing court's order dismissing Petitioner's § 2255 motion found that "[e]ven if the case of McFadden v. United States, 135 S. Ct. 2298 (2015) could be applied retroactively to Petitioner in this case, it would not assist him." See Barkley v. United States, C/A No. 9:15-81301-KAM (S.D. Fla. Nov. 9, 2015) (reflecting order dismissing Petitioner's

§ 2255 motion at ECF No. 10).³ As Petitioner does not plausibly assert that the conduct for which he was convicted has been deemed non-criminal by any substantive law change since his first § 2255 action, he cannot satisfy the criteria to invoke § 2255's savings clause and proceed under § 2241. See In re Jones, 226 F.3d at 333-34. Therefore, this court lacks jurisdiction to consider the Petition in this case.

III. Conclusion

Accordingly, the court recommends that the Petition in the above-captioned case be dismissed without prejudice and without requiring the respondent to file a return.


Paige J. Gossett
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

January 20, 2016
Columbia, South Carolina

The parties' attention is directed to the important notice on the next page.

³ The court takes judicial notice of Petitioner's court records. See Philips v. Pitt Cty. Mem'l Hosp., 572 F.3d 176, 180 (4th Cir. 2009) (holding that a court may "properly take judicial notice of matters of public record"); Gasner v. Cty. of Dinwiddie, 162 F.R.D. 280, 282 (E.D. Va. 1995) (permitting district court to take judicial notice of public documents, even when the documents are neither referenced by nor integral to plaintiff's complaint).

Notice of Right to File Objections to Report and Recommendation

The parties are advised that they may file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation with the District Judge. Objections must specifically identify the portions of the Report and Recommendation to which objections are made and the basis for such objections. “[I]n the absence of a timely filed objection, a district court need not conduct a de novo review, but instead must ‘only satisfy itself that there is no clear error on the face of the record in order to accept the recommendation.’” Diamond v. Colonial Life & Acc. Ins. Co., 416 F.3d 310 (4th Cir. 2005) (quoting Fed. R. Civ. P. 72 advisory committee’s note).

Specific written objections must be filed within fourteen (14) days of the date of service of this Report and Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b); see Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(a), (d). Filing by mail pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5 may be accomplished by mailing objections to:

Robin L. Blume, Clerk
United States District Court
901 Richland Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Failure to timely file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation will result in waiver of the right to appeal from a judgment of the District Court based upon such Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Thomas v. Arn, 474 U.S. 140 (1985); Wright v. Collins, 766 F.2d 841 (4th Cir. 1985); United States v. Schronce, 727 F.2d 91 (4th Cir. 1984).